

The Durham-Lesotho Diocesan Link

Registered Charity Number: 702809

Annual Report 2021

Throughout the year, the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and a troubled economy meant the day to day running of the Lesotho Link was often finely balanced - operations were severely impacted and plans postponed or cancelled, which significantly reduced their income. At the main LINK site in Maseru, their reduced staff base had to be kept on half pay; casual workers were brought in to cover catering, hospitality & housekeeping. During periods of lockdown, however, when staff were unable to run activities or deliver training, they utilised the time productively to reassess their long-term projects, human resources and infrastructure; they drew up new proposals and reprioritised their objectives.

The Lesotho Link's vision is to see disadvantaged and marginalised children and young people lifted up and given a better, brighter future - through scripture, education, life skills training and outdoor adventure. Because of Covid, however, all Child Headed Household (CHH) adventure camps, including those usually led by visiting UK schools and Rock UK, were cancelled. The creation of more peer educators in schools and plans to begin an enhanced CHH programme, involving a 'Youth Health Corner' and community Sunday Schools, were put on hold.

Subsequently, the majority of child-focused work took place at the LINK's second site in rural Ha Moatlane, where the CHH coordinator remained in full time work, developing both the educational and agricultural projects in addition to community-oriented self-help schemes.

When restrictions permitted, vocational training (carpentry, brick laying, welding & metalwork, cooking, garment making and agriculture) continued; the 60 places on offer were much in demand.

Agriculturally, the success of their high yielding vegetable crops meant produce could be sold to villagers cheaply and their new poultry project soon became established, supplying eggs and providing short-term employment for CHH family members. To amplify reach and impact, the Lesotho Link has partnered with, and is a service provider to, other NGOs - the newly formed Christian charity, Peace Plan Lesotho, agreed to give dual purpose chickens to CHH families so they could set up their own small businesses.

Using unspent CHH funds, LINK staff also provided the surrounding villages with emergency food parcels (corn meal, salt, beans) and other essentials, such as cooking oil and seeds.

The pandemic badly affected Christian ministry, particularly that of Lesotho's rural lay ministers who are considered key to the life of the church, even though many of them are semi-educated. Between lockdowns, LINK staff held lay minister & discipleship workshops throughout the diocese and, for the benefit of all clergy and lay ministers, continued to deliver & develop their Christian Education (CE) programme of conferences, study groups, interactive seminars and 3-year theology course (in English and in Sesotho).

In September, the LINK co-hosted Lesotho's episcopal elections; the Revd. Dr Vicentia Kgabe became the third female Bishop in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. On an official visit, she encouraged staff and praised the work of the CE department - which, this year, was wholly sponsored by the UK-based Society of the Sacred Mission (South Africa).

Government restrictions and the inability to afford trained staff meant their Health Education programme had to be temporarily suspended (save a diabetes workshop requested by the Department of Health). Their intention to revive the Environment programme was also deferred; measures taken to be eco-friendly and energy-efficient, however, remained unaffected.

LINK income is mainly generated through the provision of accommodation and catering; with this in mind, LINK staff carried out a comprehensive survey of the main site's existing infrastructure and revised its building programme. The construction of a new 8-bedded self-contained unit was shelved in favour of the repair, extension and modernisation of the kitchen, the Backpackers (original accommodation block) and the main conference hall (training and resource centre).

The proposed works were to be part-financed by the LINK's £10,000 building fund, which remained intact; Durham Link offered to send a further £10,000 once the programme had been prioritised and fully costed. It is evident they will need regular bookings, once the country opens up, in order to sustain their business.

Durham Link trustees will continue to encourage the Lesotho Link to press on with their succession planning, which is currently focused on the appointment of a new PA and financial administrator, securing local mentors and developing support networks.

Throughout the pandemic, LINK's EO and Management Board have become increasingly less dependent on Durham for guidance and emotional support, not least because of an enforced lack of face-to-face contact. Their growing confidence in their own decision-making, together with the EO's deep faith and strong leadership, will help them overcome future setbacks as they move towards self-sufficiency.

2021 was the start of an important developmental phase for the Durham Link, despite the adverse effects of the pandemic. After working in Lesotho for 30 years, both EOs notified trustees they would be stepping down from their roles in December 2022. They offered to continue working beyond this time, in a voluntary capacity, to help facilitate a successful changeover.

The charity relies on grants, in particular, the Durham Diocesan Grant of £25,000 per annum, and on donations from churches and individuals to cover their EOs' pay and expenses & in order to send £5,000 per quarter to Lesotho. Charitable giving, however, was gradually becoming more irregular and unpredictable; as the year progressed, it was clear the charity's existing EO model could no longer be afforded.

By May, trustees were able to hold their first in-person meeting - all other meetings, except one, were held virtually, including numerous sub-committee meetings. They agreed an EO was essential for the effective running of the Durham-Lesotho Link; they also agreed expenditure had to be reduced and the Lesotho Link encouraged to become less dependent on funding from Durham. A new EO job description with a slimmer, Lesotho-focused workload was drawn up and trustees began the task of seeking a replacement EO. At the same time, the EOs started to hand over various administrative jobs and responsibilities to trustees: the future appointment of new board members with the necessary skills to take on identified unfilled roles was also considered. Whilst they concentrated on the transition process, trustees decided it was both untimely and impractical to carry out any development training or spend money updating the website.

Travelling restrictions led to the cancellation of the February and November EO visits to Lesotho. Because of their much-reduced workload, both EOs' requested their remuneration be cut by 50% and reviewed periodically; this meant the Durham Link ended the year in a stronger financial position than predicted. Trustees decided to increase their regular funding to Lesotho in 2022 to push their building works through and put the LINK on a more solid financial footing.

The Durham-Lesotho LINK is advancing towards a mutually beneficial relationship which will be progressively more Lesotho LINK-led; its emphasis will be on promoting greater unity through learning and the sharing of ideas & expertise for the benefit of the people of Durham as well as Lesotho.

The Durham-Lesotho Diocesan Link is an unincorporated association

There is no limit to the number of trustees on the board; trustees may be appointed at a trustee meeting

Current trustees: Nick Barker, Elisabeth Bryant, Susan Egglestone, Ruth Hicks, Alex Nelson, Andrea Pritchard, Rick Simpson, Margaret Wilkinson

Executive Officers (self employed): Margaret Bianchi, Rob Bianchi

Address: 8 Lindisfarne Washington Tyne and Wear

Andrea Pritchard (Secretary)

October 5th 2022

DURHAM - LESOTHO DIOCESAN LINK**Charity Number : 702809****Receipts and Payments Account for the Year ended 31st December 2021**

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2021	2020
Receipts				
Donations				
Churches	4,710.15	1,270.21	5,980.36	1,926.06
Individuals	2,335.00	2,850.00	5,185.00	6,103.13
Palmer Endcliffe Trust	1,200.00	-	1,200.00	11,100.00
Basotho Education Trust	-	20,631.00	20,631.00	
Gift Aid	401.25	450.00	851.25	1,190.00
Diocese of Durham	25,000.00		25,000.00	25,000.00
Bank Interest	0.44		0.44	3.47
Total Receipts	33,646.84	25,201.21	58,848.05	45,322.66
Payments				
Transfers to Lesotho	20,000.00	4,383.00	24,383.00	41,000.00
Church of the Resurrection	-	400.00	400.00	400.00
Basotho Education Trust		10,831.00	10,831.00	
Exec. Officers' travel to Lesotho	-		-	1,998.63
Travel from Lesotho	-		-	1,500.00
Exec. Officers' Fees	4,200.00		4,200.00	8,589.00
Administration	579.88		579.88	355.50
Bank Charges	202.50		202.50	140.00
Sundry Payments	27.00		27.00	92.25
Total Payments	25,009.38	15,614.00	40,623.38	54,075.38
Surplus / Loss	8,637.46	9,587.21	18,224.67	8,752.72

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Statement of Assets

Bank Balances at 31st December 2021

CAFCash Account	36,912.87
CAF Gold Account	4,324.04

Total Bank Balances **41,236.91**

Fund Balances at 31st December 2021

Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
29,974.41	11,262.50	41,236.91

Notes

There have been no visits to or from Lesotho this year.

Gift aid note


Gift aid is still to be claimed on donations from November to December 2021.

Signed



Trustee

Date 04.02.2022


A. DENT

Hon Examiner

Date 11 FEB. 2022